



The Virginia Easy Voter Guide
Information Guide

**Commonwealth of Virginia
State Board of Elections
Washington Building, First Floor
1100 Bank Street
Richmond, VA 23219**

**Phone: 800-552-9745
TDD: 800-260-3466**

www.sbe.virginia.gov

REGISTERING TO VOTE

Who Can Register to Vote?

To be eligible to register to vote in Virginia, you must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be a resident of Virginia.
- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Be 18 years old, or 18 by the next general election.
- You do not claim the right to vote in any other state.
- Cannot be currently declared mentally incompetent by a court of law.
- If a convicted felon, your right to vote must be restored.

How to Register to Vote

If you have a driver's license or identification card issued by the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), you can register online at www.sbe.virginia.gov. You can also obtain a Voter Registration application at any DMV, public library, social service agency or Voter Registrar's office in Virginia. To find your Voter Registrar, look in the blue Government pages of your phone book under "Voter Registration" for your county or city, or go to the State Board of Elections' web site, www.sbe.virginia.gov, then click on *Forms and Publications*.

You can download and print the Voter Registration application from the same website. Complete and sign it, and mail it to your Voter Registrar.

When to Register

The deadline to register is the 22nd day before a primary or general election. If your application is mailed, it must be postmarked no

later than that date. Registrar offices are open until 5:00 p.m. on the final day of registration before an election if you are able to register in person.

Can You Register Late?

If you are away from your locality on active duty in the military or with the merchant marine, you and your spouse/dependents residing with you may register late by mail. See *Uniformed and Overseas Absentee Voters*.

If you have been discharged from active duty within the 60 days prior to the election, or you are normally absent from your locality due to active duty, merchant marine service or overseas residency, or you have been absent due to such active duty, merchant marine service or overseas residency and return to your locality to reside there within the 28 days prior to the election, you and your spouse/dependents residing with you may register late in person at your Voter Registrar's office, up to and including Election Day.

Not Sure If You're Registered?

Contact the Voter Registrar in the city or county where you live to find out if you are currently registered. You may also check your voter registration online at the website of the State Board of Elections, www.sbe.virginia.gov or call Toll Free: 1.800.552.9745 TTY: 800 260-3466

How to Register If You Have No Fixed Address

If you have no fixed or permanent address, you can still register to vote. In the *mailing address* section of the application, use the address of an agency where you receive services or any other address where you are allowed to receive mail. In the *residence address* section of the application, list the location where you most often spend the night, even if it is not a traditional address.

Do You Have More Than One Address?

You should register to vote in the city or county you consider to be your legal residence. If unsure which city or county is your legal residence, contact the Voter Registrar. He or she will review your circumstances with you and help you determine the city or county where you should register to vote. Note that it is not legal for you to be registered to vote in more than one city or county in Virginia, or in more than one state in the U.S.

How to Report Changes in Your Name or Address

It's very important that you keep your name and address up to date so you can vote in every election. If you have a Virginia DMV driver's license or identification card, you can update your registration record for changes in name or address online at www.sbe.virginia.gov. You can also submit your name or address change in writing, by either mail, fax, or email attachment to your local Voter Registrar. You must sign the change unless you are physically unable to do so. Your mark (such as an "X"), if acknowledged by a witness, is considered a valid signature.

Absentee Voting for Those Who Cannot Vote in Person

If you will not be able to go to the polls on Election Day, you may be able to vote by absentee ballot. To determine if you are eligible to vote absentee, visit the State Board of Elections website, www.sbe.virginia.gov, and review the section on *Absentee Voting*, or print an application. You may also request an application from your Voter Registrar.

Absentee Voting Applications may be completed in person in your Registrar's office or sent by mail, fax, or email attachment. If you register to vote in person, you must wait five business days before your absentee ballot application can be processed. The deadline for requesting a mailed absentee ballot is the Tuesday before the

election. The deadline for applying and voting absentee in the Registrar's office is the Saturday before the election.

Late Absentee Voting, up to 2:00 p.m. on the Monday before the election, is permitted for those recently hospitalized and persons with certain other emergencies. Call your Voter Registrar if you have an emergency and will not be able to go to the polls, to determine if you are eligible for a late absentee ballot.

Regardless of when or how you apply for your absentee ballot, your voted, signed and witnessed absentee ballot must be received by your Electoral Board by Election Day, or it cannot be counted.

Uniformed and Overseas Voters

If the Uniformed and Overseas Citizen Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) applies to you, there are special provisions in federal and state law. Here's what you need to know:

- *Uniformed Citizens* are U.S. citizens who are members of the Uniformed Services, and their family members residing with them, who are away from the city or county in which they are eligible to vote. Uniformed Services are defined as the U.S. Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard), merchant marine, commissioned corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
- *Overseas Citizens* are U.S. citizens who currently reside outside the United States, either temporarily or permanently.

To register and request an absentee ballot you need a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA). You can print this application from the following website: <http://www.fvap.gov/FPCA/fpcachoice.html>

To access state registration and voting procedures, go to:
<http://www.fvap.gov/request/request-va.html>

For general information, go to www.fvap.gov.

Please register and request your absentee ballot early. We recommend registering and requesting your absentee ballot no later than ninety days before Election Day, if possible, to allow for mailing time.

If you need individual assistance call the Virginia State Board of Elections_ Information Center at sbe-info@sbe.virginia.gov or call 804 864-8901 Toll Free: 800 552-9745 TTY: 800 260-3466.

College Students Living Away from Home

A voter may only register in one place. College students who still consider themselves residents of their home city, county or state should register to vote in that city, county or state, not in the city, county or state where they attend school. These students should contact the Voter Registrar of their home city, county or state to register to vote and request an absentee ballot to cast their vote.

A student should register where he attends school only if he considers that locality as his primary home and residence. A student who applies to register to vote in a precinct for the singular purpose of voting in that precinct has not established the required intent for domicile. Students who still have questions may contact the Voter Registrar for either locality.

Most colleges and universities also offer voter registration and absentee ballot information through their Student Services offices.

Election Day Information

When Are the Polls Open?

All polling places are open from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Election Day. You may vote at any time during these hours, or if you are in line to vote at 7:00 p.m. when the polls close.

What to Bring on Election Day

Please bring your identification with you on Election Day. Examples of valid IDs for voting include:

- Virginia voter registration card
- Valid Virginia driver's license
- Any federal, Virginia state or local government-issued ID, including military ID, with your photo or your name and address
- Employer issued photo ID card

If you do not show ID, you may vote a provisional ballot that will not be counted unless you provide a copy of your qualified identification .

If you have lost your Voter Card, and there is time before the election, call your local Voter Registrar to request a new one.

How to Find Your Polling Place/Precinct

There are three ways to find where you vote:

- Your polling place name and address are printed on your Voter Card
- Call your local Voter Registrar

- Go to our web site, www.sbe.virginia.gov, then click on *Voter Information* and then *Where Do I Vote?*

Demonstrations of Voting Equipment

You have a right to a demonstration of the voting equipment. There is a demonstration officer at every polling place who may offer or you may ask if you want a demonstration of how to use the voting machine.

Can My Child Watch Me Vote?

Your minor child, age 15 or younger, is allowed to go with you into the voting booth.

If You Need Assistance in Preparing Your Ballot

See *Accessibility*.

If You Do Not Want to Vote for Everything on the Ballot

If you prefer not to vote for a particular office or other item on the ballot, just skip that portion of the ballot.

For example: Two people are running for Mayor and you don't want to vote for either one, and you don't want to enter a write-in candidate, but you do want to vote for a school board member. You can skip the choices for Mayor, and vote for the school board member of your choice.

Your vote for the school board member will still be counted.

Sample Ballots

A sample ballot is a copy of the official ballot. Sample ballots may be produced by Electoral Boards, political parties, political committees and citizens.

Every sample ballot **must** clearly state who authorized and/or paid to have it printed. Some sample ballots are created by groups to persuade you to vote a certain way. You may be offered this type of sample ballot on your way into the polling place. **Only** the Electoral Board's sample ballot is an unbiased, complete example of what will be on the official ballot. Official sample ballots are the only kind that may be printed on white or yellow paper.

The Electoral Board is required to post the Official Sample Ballot at each polling place on Election Day. If you're unsure of what's on the ballot, ask an Election Officer to show you a copy of the Electoral Board's sample ballot.

Write-In Votes

If you want to vote for a candidate who is not listed on your ballot, you can write in the name of the candidate of your choice. Write-In votes are permitted in every election except for primaries. You should **not** write in the name of a candidate who already appears on the ballot or it will not be counted.

Write-In instructions are provided on each voting system. For paper ballots, blank space is provided below each office for Write-In votes. Just write the name in the blank space. For optical scan, you must mark the "Write-In" choice and also write in the name. If you have questions, ask an Officer of Election about Write-In procedures.

How to Avoid Over Voting

What is “over voting”? An over vote occurs if you cast more votes than are allowed.

For example, if only two names are listed for Governor and you vote for both names, you have over voted.

If you over vote on certain types of paper-style ballots, the counting machine will initially reject your ballot, An Election Official will offer you a new ballot if this was unintentional.

You can't over vote on an electronic machine (touch screen or dial-type). These machines are made so you can't accidentally cast an over vote.

Read each item on the ballot carefully to make sure you don't accidentally over vote.

Sometimes you **can** make more than one selection. For example, if five people are running for Board of Supervisors and there are three positions to fill, the ballot will say “vote for not more than three.” You may vote for up to three of the five names. This is **not** an over vote.

If You Make a Mistake on Your Ballot You May Be Able to Change It

You can change your vote if you do so **BEFORE** you cast your ballot:

- If using an electronic machine, change your choice **BEFORE** you press or select “Cast Ballot”.
- If using a paper ballot, tell an Election Official you want a new ballot.

Once you **cast your ballot**, you can't change your vote or vote again, even if you made a mistake.

Casting a Provisional Ballot

Virginia law requires a person to cast a provisional ballot if his or her registration status can't be verified either by the Election Officer or the Voter Registrar.

Provisional ballots are also used when a registrant has not shown the required ID, or when a court orders the polls to stay open past their normal closing time.

A person is permitted to vote with the understanding that the vote may not be counted. The decision to count the provisional vote is made by the local Electoral Board in the days after the election.

If you cast a provisional ballot, you will be given a notice of the time and place of the Electoral Board's meeting, and a toll-free number to check the status of your ballot. You have the right to be present when the Electoral Board makes its decision about whether to count your provisional ballot. You may request an extension up to one business day and have until noon on the Friday after the election to provide a copy of your qualified identification to the Electoral Board if you did not when you voted.

Is My Vote Secret and Secure?

The voting machine records only your vote, not your name or address or anything else about you. Unless you tell someone how you voted, no one can know how you voted. If you use an assistant to help you vote, he or she is not allowed to tell anyone how you voted.

All the voting machines used in Virginia are rigorously tested and certified to be accurate and secure.

If You Are Not Allowed to Vote, What Should You Do?

First, review the “Voter Rights and Responsibilities” poster at the polling place and our web site, www.sbe.virginia.gov, *Voter Rights and Responsibilities*. Make sure you meet the requirements that allow you to vote. If you do not understand all the requirements, ask an Election Official to explain them to you.

If you feel you met all the requirements but were still not allowed to vote, ask an Election Official to contact the Voter Registrar’s office about your case **before you leave the polling place**. The Voter Registrar will review your case and may be able to resolve the problem immediately. If your eligibility cannot be determined, ask to vote a provisional ballot **before you leave the polling place**. A provisional ballot allows the electoral board to determine your eligibility when votes are counted, usually the next day, and you have a right to attend the meeting or request an extension up to one business day to present evidence supporting your qualifications.

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome, call the State Board of Elections at 1-800-552-9745 as soon as possible, **preferably before the polls close**. The sooner the State Board knows about your problem, the sooner we can respond to you.

You may also ask the Election Officials for an Election Day Complaint form. This form will tell you on how to file a formal complaint about your case with the State Board of Elections.

Who Can’t Register or Vote?

If you’ve been convicted of a felony, you can’t register to vote unless your civil rights have been restored by the Governor or other appropriate authority. For assistance in having your voting rights restored, contact the Clemency Representative with the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth at 804-786-2441.

If your voting rights have been taken away by a court through a mental competency proceeding, those rights may be restored by the court.

Accessibility

Elections are required to be accessible to persons with disabilities and limited English proficiency. This includes accessibility to the polling place, devices that make the voting machines accessible, and provisions for person who cannot read or write English:

- All polling places are required to offer “curbside voting” to anyone who either has a physical disability or is at least 65 years old.
- Voters with disabilities may request to vote by absentee ballot instead of going to the polling place.
- You can request an audio ballot. You use headphones to listen to a reading of the ballot and make your choices. Audio ballots are currently available at polling places.
- You can choose an election official or other person to assist you. Blind voters may have any person of their choice assist them. Other voters may have anyone who is not their employer or union representative assist them.

Anyone who assists you in voting must do so according to your instructions, without trying to influence your vote, and may not in any way tell others how you voted.

No voter is required to accept assistance.

If you have a disability, the best way to assure your right to vote is to contact your local Voter Registrar prior to Election Day. Discuss your particular needs and what assistance you need to allow you to vote.

Alternative language assistance

Based on population, federal law requires us to provide Spanish translations of certain forms in Fairfax County. If you need assistance in some other language, you may ask an officer of election if an interpreter is available.

Useful Information

Phone Numbers

- State Board of Elections: 1-800-552-9745
 - In the Richmond area: 864-8901
- Telecommunications for the Deaf (TDD):
1-800-260-3466
- Clemency Representative, Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth: 804-786-2441

Internet and E-Mail Addresses

- Virginia State Board of Elections: www.sbe.virginia.gov
 - E-mail address: info@sbe.virginia.gov
- General UOCAVA information: www.fvap.gov.
 - Federal Post Card Application:
www.fvap.gov/FPCA/fpcachoice.html
- Virginia UOCAVA registration and voting procedures:
www.fvap.gov/request/request-va.html

To Find Your Local Voter Registrar

- Look in the blue Government pages of your phone book under “Voter Registration” for your county or city.
- Go to our web site, www.sbe.virginia.gov, then click on *Where Do I Vote?*
- Call the State Board of Elections at one of the phone numbers above.

As a Virginia Voter, you have the following rights:

- To be notified whether your voter registration **application** has been accepted or denied.
- To vote if you have registered at your current address at least 22 days before Election Day.
- To **receive** help from the election officials if you are unsure about anything relating to the voting process.
- To be given a demonstration of the voting equipment.
- To have your vote voided BEFORE IT IS CAST if you think you voted incorrectly. You will be given another chance to vote.
- To enter the name of a write-in candidate if the candidate of your choice is not on the ballot (other than a primary ballot).
- To have a ballot brought to your vehicle if you are 65 years of age or older or have a disability..
- To have an Election Official or other person help you vote if you have a disability or are unable to read or write.
- ***Anyone who helps you to vote must do so according to your instructions, without trying to influence your vote, and may not in any way tell others how you voted.***
- To vote a Provisional Ballot even if you have no ID with you and provide a copy of acceptable identification to the Electoral Board by Friday noon after the election. .
- To vote a Provisional Ballot if your status as a qualified voter is in question.
- To attend the Electoral Board’s provisional ballots meeting and present evidence supporting your qualifications

- To bring your minor child, age 15 or younger, into the voting booth.
- To vote if you are in line by 7:00 p.m.
- To cast an absentee ballot if you are qualified to do so.
- ***You cannot be denied the right to vote if you are eligible to do so.***

As a Virginia Voter, you have the following responsibilities:

- To keep your voter registration information up to date.
- To show your ID at the polls. If you have no ID with you, you may vote a provisional ballot and present your qualified ID to the Electoral Board by noon Friday after the election..
- To request help if you do not know how to use the voting equipment, have questions about the voting process, or if you are disabled or unable to read or write.
- To check your ballot for correctness BEFORE you cast it.
- To know that once your ballot is cast, you CANNOT be given another ballot even if you think you voted incorrectly.
- To ask the election official to call the Voter Registrar's office **BEFORE** you leave the polling place if you have problems regarding your eligibility to vote or the casting of your ballot.

These statements are only a summary of U.S. and Virginia voting laws. Please read the "Voter Rights and Responsibilities" poster at your polling place and go to the State Board of Elections' web site, www.sbe.virginia.gov

If you have questions about your voter registration status or elections in your locality, contact your local Voter Registration office or go to www.sbe.virginia.gov.

If you feel your voting rights have been violated or that you may have witnessed an election law being broken, contact the State Board of Elections at: **1-800-552-9745 or email: info@sbe.virginia.gov**.

PUBLISHED BY THE VIRGINIA STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

The Virginia Easy Voter Guide

**Commonwealth of Virginia
State Board of Elections
Washington Building, First Floor
1100 Bank Street
Richmond, VA 23219**

Phone: 800-552-9745

TDD: 800-260-3466

www.sbe.virginia.gov